



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2025

by **Ian McHugh DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2620/D/25/3370964

Shire House, Shirehall Plain, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6HT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Susannah Sherriff against the decision of North Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is PF/25/0593.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 4 dormer windows to facilitate a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Although it is not a reason for refusal in the Council's decision notice, the officer's report refers to a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and the requirement for further survey work to be undertaken in relation to protected species. I sought a copy of the PRA and comments from both parties. I have taken these into account, and it is covered below in the section titled 'Other Matters.'

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of both the appeal building and the Holt Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal property is one half of a two-storey building, which is situated in the town centre, within the heart of the CA. The CA covers much of the town and, consequently, its character and appearance is varied. However, the town centre contains a range of historic buildings of some significance, including the appeal property, which, although not statutorily listed, is registered by the Council as being of local interest. Contrary to the appellant's view, I consider it to be located in a prominent position and, in particular, it can be clearly viewed from the southern end of Albert Street.
5. Although the appeal relates to only one half of the building and the area in front of the two halves is divided by fencing and planting, part of its significance and charm is the symmetrical and balanced appearance of the building as a whole, particularly at first floor and roof levels.
6. The proposal is to construct four relatively small dormer additions on the front and rear of the property (two on each side). It is also proposed to restore a sash

window on the building, although this is not included the description of the development.

7. It is a statutory requirement that that in exercising planning functions in conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
8. The Council contends that the proposal would unbalance the roofscape and elevations of the building, consequently, it would fail to preserve or enhance the significance of the CA. It also states that the property is situated within an area designated as Public Realm, in which proposals are expected to enhance the appearance of the area. The Council states that the proposal would fail to achieve this.
9. Policies EN 4 and EN 8 of the North Norfolk Core Strategy (CS) require the design of proposals to be of high quality, reinforce local distinctiveness, and preserve or enhance the character and appearance of designated assets and other important historic buildings. These policies are consistent with the provisions of paragraph 135 and Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF).
10. In addition, the Council refers to a conflict with Policy EN 5 of the CS, which requires proposals to enhance areas designated as Public Realm. However, I am not fully persuaded that this policy is particularly applicable, as it appears to focus on works at street and ground floor levels. Therefore, I consider Policies EN 4 and EN 8 to be the most relevant in this case.
11. In reaching my decision on this issue, I observed during my site visit that dormer structures, which are similar to those proposed, are clearly evident on buildings within the wider CA and on buildings close to the appeal property. This includes the large and prominently positioned Byfords building. Some of these dormers have been added since the buildings were originally constructed. I also note that the appeal proposal has been designed and submitted following discussions between the appellant and the Council.
12. Furthermore, the appellant has drawn my attention to examples of other alterations and additions to buildings in the locality, which the Council has approved and to other appeal decisions for dormer extensions. I have noted the reasoning and approach that the other Inspectors have taken, but they concern proposals in other parts of the country. Consequently, I am not persuaded that they create a precedent for this appeal. Furthermore, as a principle, each proposal should be considered on its own individual merits.
13. The Council's Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2021) states that minor dormers may be acceptable when set below the ridge and aligned with fenestration. However, the use of the word 'may' also indicates that each case should be considered individually.
14. I consider that one of the main characteristics of the appeal property is that it is part of a larger building that includes the adjoining premises. When viewed as a whole, the current unified appearance would be disrupted, and the proposal would result in an unbalanced roofscape that would be harmful to the character and appearance of both the appeal property and the CA. Whilst some public views of the property and the dormers would be restricted, including the view from the eastern end of Albert

Street, the proposal would be clearly seen from the front, when approaching from the High Street.

15. With reference to paragraph 215 of the NPPF, I consider that the harm to the CA would be less than substantial. Consequently, I am required to weigh the harm that I have identified against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
16. The appellant has argued that the proposal is required to provide a viable, more useable and desirable space within the property, which would significantly improve living conditions for any occupants. It is also argued that the physical restoration and future use of the building would preserve its heritage value.
17. I accept that there are benefits that would accrue from the increased space and that there are limitations within the existing building. I also acknowledge that improvements to the building stock generally could be considered to be a public benefit. However, in this case I consider that the benefits are largely private and any public benefits, whilst a consideration, do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
18. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would be unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of both the appeal property and the CA. Accordingly, it would conflict with the relevant policies of the CS and with the provisions of the NPPF, as referred to above.

Other Matter

19. As stated earlier, the application was supported by a PRA. This stated that whilst the overall habitat value was deemed to be moderate, two bat emergence surveys should be carried out during the active bat season. These surveys have not been undertaken. Whether the requirement to carry out these surveys can be controlled by a planning condition is often a debateable point. Indeed, the Council has suggested wording for a condition should the appeal be allowed. However, in its further comments it has stated that normally a condition would not be appropriate and that the survey work should normally be undertaken prior to determination.
20. The appellant refutes the need for further survey work, given that the low likelihood of bats being present. Other appeal decisions are also referred to, in which Inspectors have accepted the use of conditions, or have disagreed with the need for further surveys.
21. Given my findings on the main issue in respect of character and appearance, this matter is somewhat secondary and I find no need to pursue the issue any further, although, in my opinion, such surveys would normally be required before planning permission can be granted.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above in relation to character and appearance, it is concluded that the appeal be dismissed.

Ian McHugh

INSPECTOR